

Character Builder 您好嗎？

The basic unit of the Chinese language is the *zi* (字), i.e. a Chinese word. Each *zi* has a written form (called a character, made up of strokes), a sound (made up of consonant and vowel) and a meaning (or multiple meanings). When we speak or write Chinese, we string *zi* together to form terms, phrases and sentences.

This week: Words about borrowing

還

Pronunciation: *huan* (Putonghua, 2nd tone), *waan* (Cantonese 4th tone)
Basic meaning: return, repay

Adverb 還 (*hai*) = also. Verb 還 (*huan*) = return. 還原 (*huan yuan* = return~original) = back to original state. 還手 (*huan shou* = return~hand) = hit/fight back. 衣錦還鄉 (*yi jin huan xiang* = wear~brocade~return~home-region) means home-coming of one who has made fortunes elsewhere.

Debtors 還錢 (*huan qian* = return~money), 還債 (*return~debts* = pay debts). Pawned goods are redeemed (贖還 *shu huan* = redeem~back). Sub-standard goods get 退還 (*tui huan* = retreat~return = returned). Losing gamblers want to 還本 (*huan ben* = return~betting-capital = win back losses).

有債不還 (*you zhai bu huan* = has~debts~no~payback) means default payment. Companies without 償還能力 (*chang huan neng li* = repay~return~ability~power), i.e. insolvent, have to declare bankruptcy.

by Diana Yue